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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002575

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TAGS: [IZ](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#)

SUBJECT: RRT ERBIL: KRG OPPOSITION VOWS CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE

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Classified By: RRT Erbil Team Leader Andrew Snow for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is an RRT Erbil cable.

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY: Change List officials, including both the leaders of their parliamentary bloc and Change Movement leader Nawshirwan Mustafa, pledged to play a constructive role in parliament, focusing on internal KRG governance issues, such as rule of law, separating party structures from government, and opposition to the proposed KRG constitution. They say they will run a separate list in the January 2010 national elections but will broadly align with the ruling KDP-PUK parties on national issues. Still, KDP-PUK officials are deeply skeptical, especially as reports of Nawshirwan's overtures to Maliki fuel suspicion of Nawshirwan's intentions. END SUMMARY.

Nawshirwan Focused on KRG Governance Issues  
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[1](#)3. (C) In his first meeting with RRT Team Leader, Change Movement (aka &Goran8) leader Nawshirwan Mustafa claimed not to have significant differences with Talabani and Barzani on issues of contention between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the GOI. He said Change would field a separate list for the January elections but would try to find a common discourse with the KDP and PUK. If Change were to enter into discussions with national parties, the party's objective would be to influence policy rather than secure ministerial postings, Nawshirwan said. He noted the need for better relations with Baghdad and said he would support a special status for Kirkuk. Statements by party cohorts notwithstanding, Nawshirwan appeared not to have ruled out an alliance with Arab nationalist parties. However, Nawshirwan has not ruled this out.

[1](#)4. (C) Nawshirwan framed his differences with PUK and KDP in terms of governance of the KRG. One issue that Nawshirwan and other Change officials repeatedly cite is what they see as the parties -- rather than the government -- holding sway over the Peshmerga and Asayish. Nawshirwan said the Peshmerga are still like party militias, which is contrary to the Iraqi constitution.

Change Parliamentary Leaders Elaborate  
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[1](#)5. (C) RRToffs met separately with the two leaders of the Change List bloc in the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament (IKP), Kwestan Muhamed and her deputy, Dr. Shaho Saeed. Kwestan has served in a number of PUK leadership posts, most recently as the leader of the PUK faction in the previous parliament. She is one of the handful of parliamentarians in the new parliament who served in the last one, and the only Change parliamentarian with any IKP experience.

[1](#)6. (C) Kwestan and Shaho said they had met with KRG President

Barzani as part of a series of meetings Barzani held with the leaders of each bloc in parliament. The Change MPs had presented Barzani with a list of 1,630 alleged Change supporters who had been fired from government jobs, particularly employees of the Peshmerga, Asayish, and police. Kwestan said Barzani seemed troubled by this information and said he would investigate. Kwestan said Change would use all available avenues to press for a reversal of the firings, including through parliamentary action and in court.

17. (C) Kwestan and Shaho said that Change will work as an active, positive opposition in the IKP. Kwestan expressed a desire to cooperate with the Service and Reform four-party list, which would give the opposition a total of 28 seats. (NOTE: Since this meeting there are increasing indications that the Service and Reform coalition is fracturing, with only its largest party, the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU), remaining in opposition with its six seats. Multiple contacts have told RRToffs that the other parties are negotiating with the KDP-PUK to join the government. END NOTE.) Change's parliamentary program focuses on strengthening the rule of law, budgetary transparency, separating government from party structures, and unifying what remains of the division of government institutions along KDP-PUK lines. The Change bloc intends to introduce legislation and use its power to question ministers.

Opposition will Fight Proposed KRG Constitution:  
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18. (C) Kwestan and Shaho said Change is unalterably opposed to the proposed KRG constitution that was passed by the IKP in the spring and which only awaits approval in a referendum. Kwestan noted the proposed constitution would put in place a centralized presidential system that would be out of synch with the decentralized, parliamentary system enshrined in the

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Iraqi constitution. Fearing the proposed constitution could lead to a dictatorial presidency, Change filed a court case on June 25 challenging the legality of the IKP passage of the Constitution in extended session. If the constitution were to be put to a referendum at the time of the January national elections, Change would campaign against it. (NOTE: In a separate meeting, KIU Politburo Director Dr. Hadi Ali said the KIU also opposes the constitution. END NOTE.)

19. (C) COMMENT: There continues to be a striking disconnect between the way Change officials present themselves to the RRT and how they are characterized by KRG officials. Whereas Change leaders present themselves as a constructive, reformist opposition, broadly aligned with KDP-PUK on national issues, KDP-PUK officials describe Change leaders in general, and Nawshirwan in particular, as non-reformist opportunists who have benefited from a protest vote. KDP-PUK officials also accuse Change of entertaining alliances with Arab parties in the January elections. PM Advisor George Bakoos told PolOff on September 17 that Nawshirwan had met with Maliki and offered to join Maliki's coalition as long as Maliki helped fund his campaign. According to Bakoos, Maliki declined the deal, as he concluded that he would need KDP and PUK more than Goran for national elections. These types of overtures only fuel KDP-PUK rhetoric that Nawshirwan is non-reformist opportunist who only wants to cause problems for the KRG and Talabani. END COMMENT.

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